

he's done with this legislation, I know it's been a long, difficult task, but I wish I weren't. I wish I were able to stand here and say to the body that the original bill should pass in its current form. Ever since I've become involved with legislation that relates to children, first on the Health and Human Services Committee, then on the Education Committee, I have heard of this problem. We have all of these different agencies of state government, Department of Education, corrections, DSS, DPI, all of whom relate to children's issues and give services to children, and none of them seem to be communicating with one another. All of them seem to be protecting their own turf, their own programs become the...the end all and be all, and they aren't talking to each other. I've attended countless discussions among legislators, committee hearings, bill introductions, seminars. They all start with the premise that we need more collaboration between agencies that are dealing with children, whether it be in early childhood education, juvenile justice, other areas. And they'll spend an hour or two talking about ways in which we do that, and they'll conclude with a brilliant statement that we need more collaboration between agencies that deal with children. And it goes on, and it goes on, and it goes on. Ten years ago, when I came in here, Senator Kilgarin had a bill setting up a children's agency, and the message was, got a problem, these agencies need to work together, but the time wasn't right ten years ago to do that sort of thing. Senator Bernard-Stevens introduced this bill, LB 447, that would have taken a piece of the children's initiative and told agencies that they need to work together. And, unfortunately, the message of the Bernard-Stevens amendment now is it's still not time for those agencies to work together, we're going to appoint a director who's going to come up with a plan, and maybe when that plan is directed it will be the magic formula that will get these agencies to begin collaborating. I'm becoming frustrated with the direction that this issue takes, and this is absolutely no criticism of Senator Bernard-Stevens. My guess is he probably would tend to agree with that assessment also. But I know that we're not ready to do this yet. But we need to get ready and do it some time down the road. So, I'm supportive of this amendment that, in effect, delays implementation of collaboration, and creates a process for bringing a plan forward that, hopefully, will do it properly. But I think we, as a Legislature, need to begin to talk a little bit about our frustrations that these agencies are not doing what we'd like to see them do. And I don't want to paint a picture that nothing